

WILDLIFE TRAVEL



Isles of Scilly 2011



Isles of Scilly species lists and trip report, 15th-22nd September 2011

#	DATE	LOCATIONS
1	15 th Sept	Scillonian & St Mary's: The Garrison & Hugh Town
2	16 th Sept	St Agnes
3	17 th Sept	The Eastern Isles and St Martin's
4	18 th Sept	Tresco
5	19 th Sept	St Mary's: Telegraph, Maypole, Holy Vale, Higher Moors, Lower Moors
6	20 th Sept	Bryher
7	21 st Sept	St Mary's: Halangy Down, Telegraph, Juliet's Garden, Peninnis Head
8	22 nd Sept	St Mary's & Scillonian

LIST OF TRAVELLERS

Leaders

Rosemary Parslow

Philip Precey

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15th September 2011. The Garrison & Hugh Town, St Marys

A pretty uneventful journey from Penzance on the Scillonian included, for some, perhaps the briefest ever sighting of a single Common Dolphin, which appeared next to the boat for all of 2 seconds before disappearing, never to be seen again. There were plenty of Gannets along the way, as well as a Fulmar or two and a handful of Guillemots.

Arriving on the quay at Hugh Town, we met up with Rosemary and made our way to the Lyonesse guesthouse, our home for the next week.

All settled in, and with lunch sorted, we set off for a wander around the Garrison headland. On a sunny afternoon, we started with a passing Clouded Yellow and continued the butterfly theme by finding Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown and a single Small Tortoiseshell, as well as at least 5 Hummingbird Hawk-moths. Around the Garrison we found some of the special plants of the islands, including Autumn Lady's Tresses (unfortunately gone over) growing on the wall tops, the tiny Four-leaved Allseed and the 'subtle' Western Clover. We compared Common Gorse and Western Gorse and looked at Bell Heather and Ling growing side by side. Offshore, we could similarly compare Shag and Cormorant sitting side-by-side, while grazing the turf was a lovely black Rabbit.

An immature male Peregrine was seen several times overhead, putting on a particularly impressive display stooping and soaring over Porthcressa beach. Not quite so showy, but certainly much more intriguing was the large bat watched feeding in the shelter of the trees north of Morning Point: the only resident bats on the islands are the tiny Pipistrelles, and this was much much bigger, and noticeably tired, landing several times on the wall...

16th September 2011. St Agnes

Our first of the 'off islands', today we explored St Agnes. Arriving by the Turk's Head, we wandered down past Cove Vean and around onto the wonderfully named Wingletang Down. Here we found several Wheatears, which posed nicely for us in the 'scope, as well as small parties of Linnet and a Wren or two. The heathland here is wind-pruned to form 'waved heath', a very rare habitat pretty much restricted to Scilly!

At Beady Pool we admired some nice strandline plants, including Yellow Horned Poppy, Sea Beet and Sea Kale, looked out towards the Bishop lighthouse and 'enjoyed' a brief but impressive spell of 'weather' which came in very fast from the Atlantic. Before leaving the Down, we paused near Boy's Rock to look at one of Scilly's really special plants, one of Britain's rarest ferns, the tiny Least Adder's Tongue *Ophioglossum lusitanicum*... all suitably impressed, we headed into Middle Town for lunch.

After lunch, we wandered down past the Parsonage, with nearby walls home to yet another rare fern, Lanceolate Spleenwort and a dead Lesser White-toothed Shrew (better known as simply the Scilly Shrew) in a gateway, to look over the bay of Periglis, the cricket field meadow of fine grasses, clovers and Chamomile and the nearby Big Pool. Just two days ago, Big Pool had been home to a small party of waders from North America few days earlier... today, just two Coot and a Moorhen. Ah well, timing is everything... On the nearby beach we watched Curlew, Turnstone, Ringed Plover and a handful of White Wagtails picking over the strandline.

Butterflies seen during the day included plenty of Speckled Woods (the Scilly form being slightly different to the mainland butterfly), a male Common Blue and a couple each of Peacock, Red Admiral and Large White.

The boat trip back to St Marys was a little choppier than this morning, enlivened by a single juvenile Kittiwake.

After dinner, news of a possible Northern Waterthrush, a very rare vagrant from North America, sent our leaders scampering off into the dusk... no luck, this time.

17th September. The Eastern Isles and St Martins

Today we headed north east, first dropping off a team of pirates on St Martins before our boat, the Surprise, took us around the Eastern Isles in search of Grey Seals. And seals were found aplenty! First a handful of animals bobbing about in the sea, then a few adults hauled out onto rocks, before we finally came upon a large group of about 50 animals on a sheltered sandy beach on the wonderfully-named Great Ganilly island. We even heard them singing, very mournful cries luring us onto the rocks!

After our time with the seals, we got off on St Martins at Higher Town and spent the rest of the day exploring the island.

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We had a look at some of the interesting arable weeds in some of the small bulb fields around Higher Town, plants including Corn Spurrey, Dwarf Mallow, Musk Storks-bill and Small Nettle, as well as Lesser Swinecress growing on the path (and smelling of cress). On the walls we found Maidenhair Spleenwort and Black Spleenwort, as well as the large Madeiran Cranesbill.

On the heathland on Turfy Hill we looked at the effects of concerted bracken rolling, with heath plants coming back in: Golden-rod, Heath Milkwort, Tormentil and Sheep's-bit. A new butterfly for the trip was a rather tatty male Small Copper. On The Plains, at the back of Great Bay, we found a small party of grounded migrants: two each of Whinchat, Stonechat and Wheatear. After a bit of beach combing (with some brightly coloured periwinkles and a beautiful little scallop), we made our way inland. Along the sandy paths we found another of Scilly's amazingly tiny specialities: the Suffocated Clover! A plant so small that a bit of wind can leave it buried in the sand.

Just before getting back on the boat and returning to St Marys, we found Weasel's Snout in the flowerbeds near St Martin's Hotel, and a big patch of Sea Rocket on the shore there. On the boat ride back, as well as some very big waves, we passed several Sandwich Terns and a single first-winter Mediterranean Gull.

18th September. Treasco

Today dawned blustery, and only got more so! Not to be deterred, we braved the waves for a bouncy crossing to Treasco, landing at New Grimsby: a place less like Grimsby, it is hard to imagine!

Today was split pretty equally between the exotic delights of the famous Abbey Gardens (including some superb Australian and South African plants, and a little party of Golden Pheasants!), and some good birds.

A Little Egret was feeding on Plumb Island as we docked at the quay and a Merlin sent the Swallows into a panic over the Abbey Pool. Otherwise, the bird activity was all on Great Pool. From the hides we enjoyed two Water Rails creeping around the edge of the reeds, a few Gadwall, with the males looking particularly smart, and a good variety of waders: Redshank, Greenshank, Dunlin, a single juvenile Black-tailed Godwit and, highlight of the day, five Pectoral Sandpipers, a rare visitor from across the Atlantic!

19th September. St Mary's

We started the day by taking the local bus, a rather Heath Robinson contraption, up to the top of the island at Telegraph. From here, we walking slowly back down, stopping at various spots along the way.

Our first port of call was Newford Duck Ponds, two tiny patches of water which were, amazingly, home to a very tired young Blue-winged Teal, freshly arrived from North America and now busily feeding up: it's a hungry business, flying across the Atlantic in the trail of a hurricane! Nearby, we found a small patch of the rare Cornish Moneywort, a plant in decline on the islands.

From here we ambled slowly past Borough Farm, where we picked out White Ramping Fumitory, Tall Ramping Fumitory and Common Ramping Fumitory, and on to Maypole. Here a brief bit of excitement came as a juvenile Common Buzzard flew overhead at the same time as a calling, but unfortunately invisible, European Bee-eater! This last bird has been resident on the island for 4 months now, but is still very hard to track down...

The nature trail along Holy Vale gave us the opportunity to compare Water Cress and Fool's Water Cress growing side by side, along with some impressive Elm trees and the lovely Royal Fern. Birds included a handful of Chiffchaff and at least 2 Spotted Flycatchers, taking advantage of the sun and shelter to feed up. Overhead, a Sparrowhawk panicked the local Swallows and House Martins.

Continuing downhill, this time to Higher Moors, passing the extraordinary Tussock Sedges by the path to the first hide where we saw... nothing at all! Moving quickly on to the second hide, all changed as we enjoyed wonderful close views of two juvenile Pectoral Sandpipers and a juvenile Dunlin. Over the far side were a group of six tired Greenshanks.

Our picnic lunch was taken in the shelter of Porthellick beach, where we enjoyed watching Ringed Plovers, Turnstones and 4 Greenshank feeding on the mud and a couple of Rock Pipits picking along the strand line. At the back of the beach, Yellow Horned Poppy was in flower. This is the beach where the body of the ill-fated Sir Cloudsley Shovel came ashore after he lost part of his fleet and 1400 men on the Western Rocks in 1707.

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We continued our walk across the waded heathland of Salakee Down, past the end of the airport, down to Porth Minick (where we found the exotic House Holly Fern and the lovely Sea Pea in flower) and then round Tolman Head to Old Town. After a pit stop for ice cream, we headed through Lower Moors, stopping in at one of the hides to enjoy yet another juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper with a single Greenshank and a lovely little Grey Wagtail, before emerging back out on the main road and heading back into town.

20th September. Bryher

We went to Bryher. It rained. A lot.

Shelter was sought, first in the church where we admired the new stained glass windows by local artist Oriel Hicks, then in the Hell Bay hotel where we dried off temporarily. We did find gone-over Autumn Ladys' Tresses on Samson Hill, Long-headed Poppy and Common Fumitory in a weedy field where we had lunch, Goose Barnacles on a washed up log on the beach and some very nice plants around the saline lagoon: Beaked Tassel-weed, Fennel-leaved Pondweed, Lesser Sea Spurrey, both Danish and Common Scurvy Grass, *Juncus gerardii* and *J. maritimus*. There were also two Little Egrets by Anneka's Quay. But really, it just rained a lot...

Today's lesson: if you learn one thing from this trip, it's never hand rear a deer. A weasel, on the other hand, is fine!

21st September. St Mary's

Weather is as weather is, and today dawned bright and sunny!

After breakfast, we hopped on the local bus up to Telegraph "get off here for black mass and ritual sacrifice"... where we almost immediately found a lovely Wryneck on a garden wall!

The morning was mainly one for the archaeology fans, visiting Bant's Carn entrance grave, Halangy Down Romano-British village and the impressive Longstone Menhir, hidden away in the pines. Around the "village" were some very good Chamomile lawns, with Marsh Woundwort looking rather out of place amongst the bracken and brambles on the track-side and plenty of Common Bird's Foot along the sandy margins: another for the tiny-plant appreciation society!

We retired to the lovely café at Juliet's Garden for lunch, which had to be protected from the hordes of marauding sparrows.

Making our way back to town, we stopped at Porth Mellon beach, where at least 9 first winter Mediterranean Gulls were amongst the 120+ Black-headed Gulls feeding along the surf and a small party of Sanderling were scampering across the beach.

Our afternoon ramble was out to the end of Peninnis Head. Among the heathland, we tracked down some rock exposures, apparently no different to nearby rocks, but home to two very rare lichens: the tiny, grey Ciliate Strap Lichen amongst the grass and the beautiful spun-sugar-like Golden Hair Lichen on the bare rock.

While watching the Gannets feeding offshore, we noticed a group of around 30 Harbour Porpoises amongst the waves, as the Scillonian steamed around the Garrison and off back to the mainland.

22nd September. St Mary's and return to Penzance

A free day: for those who chose the morning boat trip around Annet, a pod of Common Dolphins was a highlight.

In the afternoon, we all mustered again for one last boat trip, this time back to the mainland on the Scillonian, passing a handful of porpoises and dolphins, Manx Shearwater, Great Skua, three Grey Phalaropes, Gannets and Fulmars on our way back to Penzance.

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BIRDS

1. Mute Swan, *Cygnus olor*. 5 on Great Pool, Tresco
2. Canada Goose, *Branta canadensis*. 6 by Great Pool, Tresco
3. Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos*. St Agnes. Tresco.
4. Gadwall, *Anas strepera*. 2 on Big Pool, St Agnes. Good numbers on Great Pool, Tresco. 1 female on Newford Duck Pond, St Marys.
5. **Blue-winged Teal, *Anas discors***. One very hungry immature bird on Newford Duck Pond, St Marys, fresh in from North America.
6. Teal, *Anas crecca*. 2 on Great Pool, Tresco
7. Red-legged Partridge, *Alectoris rufa*. Several released birds on Tresco
8. Pheasant, *Phasianus colchicus*. Lots of released birds on Tresco
9. Golden Pheasant, *Chrysolophus pictus*. 3 males wandering around in the Abbey Gardens, Tresco.
10. Fulmar, *Fulmarus glacialis*. Ones or twos seen between the islands occasionally and from the Scillonian
11. **Manx Shearwater, *Puffinus puffinus***. Small numbers from the Scillonian on the way back
12. Gannet, *Morus bassanus*. Fairly common out at sea, between the islands and from the Scillonian.
13. Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo*. One juvenile seen from the Garrison, St Marys, alongside Shag.
14. Shag, *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*. Common on the rocky coasts, out at sea, between the islands and from the Scillonian.
15. **Little Egret, *Egretta garzetta***. One on Plumb Island, Tresco. 2 around Bryher.
16. Grey Heron, *Ardea cinerea*. Small numbers seen around the coast on all the islands.
17. **Common Buzzard, *Buteo buteo***. One juvenile over Maypole, St Mary's.
18. Sparrowhawk, *Accipiter nisus*. One over Holy Vale, St Mary's.
19. **Peregrine, *Falco peregrinus***. A juvenile male over Hugh Town on 15th.
20. Kestrel, *Falco tinnunculus*. Seen fairly frequently around St Marys.
21. **Merlin, *Falco columbarius***. One chasing swallows and linnets over Abbey Pool, Tresco.
22. **Water Rail, *Rallus aquaticus***. Two at the edge of the reeds, Great Pool, Tresco
23. Moorhen, *Gallinula chloropus*. Big Pool, St Agnes; Great Pool, Tresco; St Marys.
24. Coot, *Fulica atra*. 2 on Big Pool, St Agnes, several on Abbey Pool, Tresco
25. Oystercatcher, *Haematopus ostralegus*. Common on the coast.
26. Ringed Plover, *Charadrius hiaticula*. Fairly common on sandy bays, and 2 on Great Pool, Tresco
27. Sanderling, *Calidris alba*. One juvenile, New Grimsby, Tresco. Around 10 on Porth Mellon, St Mary's
28. Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres*. Common on the coast.
29. Dunlin, *Calidris alpina*. A small flock on Great Pool, Tresco; 2 juveniles on Higher Moors, St Mary's.
30. **Pectoral Sandpiper, *Calidris melanotos***. 5 on Great Pool, Tresco; 2 on Higher Moors and 1 on Lower Moors, St Mary's.
31. Redshank, *Tringa totanus*. About 20 on Great Pool, Tresco
32. Greenshank, *Tringa nebularia*. 3 on Great Pool; one on New Grimsby beach, Tresco; 6 on Higher Moors, 4 on Porthellick Beach and 1 on Lower Moors, St Mary's.
33. Black-tailed Godwit, *Limosa limosa*. One juvenile on Great Pool, Tresco
34. Bar-tailed Godwit, *Limosa lapponica*. One flew past Cove Vean, St Agnes
35. Curlew, *Numenius arquata*. Several around Porth Coose and Porth Killier, St Agnes; Bryher.
36. Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus*. One heard on the beach at Halangy, St Marys
37. **Great Skua, *Catharacta skua***. A couple seen from the Scillonian on the way back to Penzance
38. Black-headed Gull, *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*. A handful on the coast.
39. **Mediterranean Gull, *Larus melanocephalus***. One first winter, coming back from St Martins. 9 first winters on Porth Mellon beach, St Mary's
40. Kittiwake, *Rissa tridactyla*. One first winter, coming back from St Agnes.
41. Herring Gull, *Larus argentatus*. Very common
42. Lesser Black-backed Gull, *Larus fuscus*. Fairly common around the coast.
43. Great Black-backed Gull, *Larus marinus*. Common around the coast.
44. Sandwich Tern, *Sterna sandvicensis*. Small numbers seen between the islands.
45. Feral Pigeon, *Columba livia*. Small groups seen on Tresco and St Marys
46. Stock Dove, *Columba oenas*. One over the airfield, St Mary's.
47. Woodpigeon, *Columba palumbus*. Common
48. Collared Dove, *Streptopelia decaocto*. Common
49. **Bee-eater, *Merops apiaster***. One heard calling overhead near Maypole.
50. **Wryneck, *Jynx torquilla***. One found feeding along a wall at Telegraph, St Mary's
51. Swallow, *Hirundo rustica*. Common around the islands
52. House Martin, *Delichon urbicum*. Several around the Abbey on Tresco; St Mary's.

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53. Rock Pipit, *Anthus petrosus*. Common around rocky shores
54. Meadow Pipit, *Anthus pratensis*. Small numbers on St Agnes and St Martins
55. White Wagtail, *Motacilla alba*. Small numbers seen on weedy beaches, flat grassy fields etc.
56. Grey Wagtail, *Motacilla cinerea*. One on Lower Moors, St Mary's.
57. Dunnock, *Prunella modularis*. Common
58. Robin, *Erithacus rubecula*. Several in the Abbey Gardens, Tresco
59. Northern Wheatear, *Oenanthe oenanthe*. At least 10 on Wingletang Down, St Agnes; 2 on The Plains, St Martins; several around St Mary's, including 5+ on Penninis Head.
60. **Whinchat, *Saxicola rubetra***. 2 on The Plains, St Martins
61. Stonechat, *Saxicola torquatus*. 2 on The Plains, St Martins
62. Song Thrush, *Turdus philomelos*. Common and friendly!
63. Blackbird, *Turdus merula*. Common
64. Whitethroat, *Sylvia communis*. One juvenile in a hedge near Juliet's Garden, St Mary's
65. Chiffchaff, *Phylloscopus collybita*. Several along Holy Vale, St Mary's. One or two around Telegraph, St Mary's
66. Wren, *Troglodytes troglodytes*. Common
67. Spotted Flycatcher, *Muscicapa striata*. At least 3 on St Agnes; 4+ along Holy Vale, St Mary's.
68. Great Tit, *Parus major*. Common
69. Blue Tit, *Parus caeruleus*. Common
70. Carrion Crow, *Corvus corone*. A small number seen on all the islands
71. Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*. Common
72. House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus*. Common
73. Chaffinch, *Fringilla coelebs*. Common
74. Linnet, *Carduelis cannabina*. Common
75. Goldfinch, *Carduelis carduelis*. Common
76. Greenfinch, *Chloris chloris*. Common

MAMMALS

Rabbit: one black bunny on The Garrison, St Marys. Several 'normal' individuals elsewhere.

Lesser White-toothed Shrew: one dead near the Parsonage, St Agnes.

Common Dolphin: one very briefly, from the Scillonian on the way over; a nice school near Annet and a handful from the Scillonian on the way back to the mainland.

Harbour Porpoise: around 30+ off Peninnis Head, St Mary's; several from the Scillonian on the way back to Penzance.

Grey Seal: at least 60 around the Eastern Isles and c5 off Great Bay, St Martins. One 'called in' by Robin on Bryher

Bat sp: one large, dull brown bat on The Garrison, St Marys on 15th.

INVERTEBRATES

Red Admiral: St Agnes, St Mary's

Peacock: One on St Agnes

Small Tortoiseshell: Singles on The Garrison & Penninis, St Mary's

Common Blue: St Agnes, St Martins

Small Copper: St Martins, Tresco

Large White: St Marys, St Agnes, St Martins, Tresco

Speckled Wood: St Marys, St Agnes, St Martins, Tresco

Meadow Brown: St Agnes, St Martins

Clouded Yellow: 1 male, Hugh Town, 15th September.

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: c10 around The Garrison. 1 on St Martins

6-spotted Burnet Moth, St Agnes

Devil's Coach-horse

Green Shield-bug

Goose Barnacle: washed up on the beach, Bryher

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SELECTED PLANTS

(rare or interesting species in bold)

FERNS

Black Spleenwort, St Mary's & St Martin's

Sea spleenwort, St Mary's, St Agnes etc.

Lanceolate Spleenwort, St Agnes

Maidenhair Spleenwort, St Mary's

Hart'stongue Fern, widespread

House Holly Fern, rocks, St Mary's

Lady Fern, St Mary's

Broad Buckler fern, St Mary's

Least Adderstongue fern, St Agnes

FLOWERING PLANTS

Annual Mercury, arable fields

Autumn Lady's Tresses, St Mary's, Bryher

Babington's leek, Tresco

Balm-leaved Figwort, St Mary's, Tresco

Beaked Tasselweed, Bryher

Bell Heather, widespread

Bermuda Buttercup, arable fields

Chamomile, widespread grassland

Common Birdsfoot, St Mary's

Common Broomrape, Bryher

Common Gorse, Widespread

Common Scurvygrass, Bryher

Corn Marigold, arable fields

Corn Spurrey, arable fields

Cut-leaved Deadnettle, arable fields

Danish Scurvygrass, Bryher

Dwarf mallow, arable fields

Fennel-leaved pondweed, Bryher

Field Woundwort, arable fields

Fool's Watercress, St Mary's

Four-leaved Allseed, arable fields, pavement cracks

Gipsywort, St Mary's, Tresco

Goldenrod, St Martin's, St Mary's

Guernsey Fleabane, Bryher

Heath Milkwort, heathland

Hemlock Water Dropwort, St Mary's

Hottentot Fig, widespread

Large Birdsfoot trefoil, St Mary's, St Martin's, Tresco

Lesser sea spurrey, Bryher

Ling, widespread

Long-headed poppy

Lousewort, heaths

Marsh Woundwort, St Mary's

Musk Storksbill, arable fields

New Zealand Flax, St Martin's

Pale Dewplant, St Mary's, Tresco

Pellitory-of-the-wall, St Mary's

Portland Spurge, St Agnes, Bryher, St Mary's

Purple Dewplant, Tresco

Purple Viper's Bugloss, arable fields (probably accidentally introduced with crop)

Red Clover, Bryher etc

Red form of White Clover *Trifolium repens townsendii*

Reed, Tresco, St Mary's

Sally-my-handsome, St Martin's

Saltmarsh Rush, St Agnes, Bryher

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Sea Club Rush, St Agnes
Sea Holly, Bryher
Sea Kale, St Mary's, Bryher
Sea Pea, St Mary's
Sea Rush, St Mary's, Bryher
Sea Sandwort, widespread beaches
Sea Spurge, beaches
Small Nettle, arable fields
Small-flowered Tree Mallow, arable fields
Spotted Medick, widespread
Suffocated Clover, St Martin's
Tormentil, widespread
Tree Mallow, coasts including Eastern Isles
Tussock sedge, St Mary's
Water Pepper, St Mary's
Watercress, St Mary's
Western Clover, St Mary's
Western Gorse, St Mary's
White Clover, widespread
Wire plant, St Mary's
Yellow Bartsia, Tresco
Yellow Bristlegrass, arable field St Martin's
Yellow-horned Poppy, St Agnes, St Mary's, Bryher